

The Persecution of the Church 17

the main statement and admit that Galerius was the most active and unsparing enemy of the Christians in the Imperial circle. This rough soldier, trained in the school of two such martinets as Au-relian and Probus, who enforced military discipline by the most pitiless methods, would not stay to reason with a soldier's religious prejudices. Unhesitating obedience or death — that was the only choice he gave to those who served under him, and when, after his great victory over the Parthians, his position and prestige in the East were beyond challenge, we find Christian martyrdoms in the track of his armies, in the Anti-Taurus, in Coele-Syria, in Samosata.

Galerius began to purge his army of Christians. Unless they would sacrifice, officers were to lose their rank and private soldiers to be dismissed ignominiously without the privileges of long service. Several were put to death in Moesia, where a certain Maximus was Governor. Among them was a veteran named Julius, who had served in the legion for twenty-six years, and fought in seven campaigns, without a single black mark having been entered against his name for any military offence. Maximus did his best to get him off, "Julius," he said, "I see that you are a man of sense and wisdom. Suffer yourself to be persuaded and sacrifice to the gods." "I will not," was the reply, "do what you ask. I will not incur by an act of sin eternal punishment." "But," said the Governor, "I take the sin upon myself. I will use compulsion so that you may not seem to act voluntarily. Then you will be able